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MAKING IT HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE
or THIS IS THE SCULPTURE or *SIGH

Todd Barry

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MAKING IT HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE or

THIS IS THE SCULPTURE

or

*SIGH

Todd Barry’s

BFA STATEMENT FINAL DRAFT

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studying at the Sam Fox School of Art and Design

of Washington University in Saint Louis

in the year 2014

in the month of May

""_(o_O)_""""---

---1 This is a participatory project. It is the nature of the form. Its reading will be greatly enhanced if one actively engages with the text.
here is an

ABSTRACT

ion

of what’s going on

in the pages that follow...

You will be punched in the face and then poked in the side

(it seems, someone, has something, to say)

You start off with a slow looking-back – making a steady assumption

You take that assumption, open it up – into elaboration, and sing the thing

RIGHT ON out of itself

You sculpt

You step back

You say, ‘wait a minute – relax’

You wake up, wiggle toes, wait for [something], move, make~ into

[something], and stand by it

You laugh, get grounded, fight

your way outside, come

back, and take care of things

You feel, in form

You go back at it, and get it out – there

(there) You endure, go away, gather, and, get, back, in

again, and again, and again

You lose

It’s nothing

Together – it’s [something]...
you see
I have this philosophy
with regards to the written word
and all creation I suppose
that if it doesn't come RUSHING out of you
then
DON'T
WASTE
MY TIME
but I suppose
if you want
the bullshit
there's always plenty
in storage
but let's not go there
let's go way back
after all,
que sais-je?
...

CHAPTER I. Ethos

Horace
a quiet meditative man
and/or a clement Epicurean with a strong conviction by means of moralism
alive at the tail end of the Greek Hellenistic Period
fond of philosophy, a slower country life, afternoons of study, and
(presumably) letter-writing, for today, we are left only with his two/part Epistles (or ‘letters’), wherein, he writes
\textit{ut pictura poesis}
or, like a picture, poetry

\footnote{beginning}
\footnote{and end of artist statement}
\footnote{‘what do I know?’ - the spirit of unknowing to be exemplified and finally resolved, like Montaigne, through an essay form (such as this)}
words, known nowadays as our bedrock text forging a connection between things visual and those verbal in THE ARTS but for the sake of our story, as is poetry, let’s say... so is installation art.

now

let us LEAP forward THROUGH TIME to the early 14th Century when Dante writes his famous epic poem, ‘The Divine Comedy’ in its second part Purgatorio is depicted as an upwardly spiraling climb around a mountain much like the low-relief sculptures of Trajan’s column in Rome later in the poem (CANTO X) Dante in fact portrays the bereaved mother coming across the famous column, referring to their subsequent dialogue asesto visibleparlare (or, ‘this visible speaking’) somehow this sculpture has SPOKEN...

... ... ...

Chapter II. I see my work as a WAKE UP call I want to find a silence and take that silence and have it HUMmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm everyone I intend [sculpture] to talk6 I like wandering around and finding things to write on more OPEN than a notebook or a novel those always feel a bit CLOSED to me some things are better left closed, but it seems I have no choice OPEN UP sometimes less isn’t more I hope I can open the right books for people socialize sometimes share anyhow I want to make everyone understand

5 this is a claim
6 this is also a claim
that it's ok to not understand
that it's ok to be not okay

I propose to not just PLAY AROUND
to say what I want to say

in a nonbookvisualartwritingway

materials⁷ bore me...
except, like
toothbrushes

nail clippers too

like the other morning
my suitemate came up to me in our living room when I was
'working on things' on my laptop and began galloping his nail clipper
on the table toward my hand making little 'eeee' and 'oooo' noises of
supposed pleasure or vague desire or curiosity or anxiousness idk

i felt alert
less miserable

the other night
we were talking about the possibility of us humans all being trees that,
just like, dropped seeds everywhere instead of having sex and stuff because i
was holding half of a seed he had recently collected and placed on our dining
room table, and i had tossed it to him and he had tossed it back and i thought
he made a crack about his seed referencing his semen when he hadn't really
meant it like that but we started talking about the treelike seed-dropping sex
scenario anyhow, and then the word 'wind' came up, afterwhich i said (in a
sort of self-mockingly ashamed manner) how we all, really were, just 'blowin
in the wind' i guess, afterwhich he said a lotta phrases ending with something
like the fact that yes -- and all he really wanted was a little 'shelter from the
storm'

(no one's gonna get that i don't think
those were bob dylan references)

you see though?
it spurred something
an object got us going
an object should

GET YOU GOING

i dont know about you
but i'll make art 'till my face falls off and i can't feel my toes
just the way it goes
living sux

---

⁷ clay for example. I used to be obsessed, now, not so much.
⁸ art is...
art's better\textsuperscript{9} that'll be my next sculpture.

...or maybe this:

GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
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ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX
GIVE ME MONEY
I'M WEAK
HELP
ART SUX

now don't get me wrong...

I like doing art
while sitting
while standing up
while throwing up
in the middle of the night
at noon
crepuscule
dawn

fuck it I'll sit here
playing the fool\textsuperscript{10} for days

but unfortunately

\textsuperscript{9} an expression of pessimism
\textsuperscript{10} = doing art
various bodily functions
are rather limiting
and I routinely
get taken advantage of
it's a doggy dog" world
i'm more of a cat person myself
_.
...
...
...
Chapter III. the area of pause

you see
Writing is also my cat. Writing lets me face it. It chills me out. For a while anyhow. Then my wires get crossed and I have to do it all over again. I can't understand writers who decide to stop writing. How do they chill out?iii

Bukowski said that. and good god...

there is nothing wrong
with resting
yes it's nice
to be sleeping
when I want
to be sleeping

overambition
is a condition
worth
proper
recognition

some people enjoy
thinking about sex
I enjoy
thinking about
not thinking

nothing matters
but sometimes
the matter
that is nothing
becomes
meaningful

- ripening

\[\text{pre-Snoop Dogg: “dog-eat-dog world”}\]
slowly building up power
from solitude
I have worked hard
for this space
havent I?
gazing out of windows
putting off
everything

how beautiful it is
to be nothing
to be nowhere

finally

... ... ...

Chapter IV. And then usually / the wind is part of the process, the rain is part of the process

I like staying in bed for long extended periods of time before getting up and doing things because I usually never want to do much of anything besides occasionally read a book or check my email or masturbate or drink water or pee or something but usually I just like staying in bed doing nothing for long extended periods of time before getting up and doing something like eating cereal

And then I often watch movies that I don't actually like but seem familiar enough to something I would actually like, that I passively accept their shortcomings in stride before slowly realizing what it is that I really like (which most often isn't even a movie at all)

And then I think about that (what I like)
– some writer, some mystery, some zone where fields zig-zag
and swerve, some space of practicality that escapes me
And then I try
and
take that silence
and
screw-- with it

with whatever the hell happens to be in front of me
paint pens
sharpies
writing on
wood panels
styrofoam
drywall
whatever found
that moves me around
really anything thick enough
to pick up and put up somewhere
to be SEEN sculpturally
then I think (I)
my work should make the

WINDOWS SHAKE
the last thing I want to do
is write something STALE
and so journalistic jazz
i will continue to toot my visual poem horn
no matter how torn they take me
every god damn trace is my statement of intent
...

Chapter V. but really...

I’m just playing with puzzles and calling it practice
I need to make amends with the mundane
I’ve been here before
I know this now
my artwork is eating away at me
the atrophy of imagination
I’m getting carried away
caught in the clouds
I gotta calm myself disarm
and come down to face the facts of the farm
training of the body must take precedence over training of thought if it is to create and supervise its own ideas…

I knew only too well the deceitful nature of any kind of conflict in art. If I must have a struggle, I felt I should take the offensive in fields outside art; in art, I should defend my citadel. It was necessary to be a sturdy defender within art, and a good fighter outside it. Yukio Mishima said that and I agree.

there's nothing to prove
nothing to promote

but I do like a poem
that feels
well-fought

the way I see it

lively
up yourself
or else...

fall

into disrepair
as have
the st. louis warehouses of old,
since enveloped
by rust and
sadness

as Evan Pellervo put it

... ...

Chapter VI. once YOU are all taken care of...

il faut cultiver notre jardin

as Candide

water the plants
buy the groceries
clean the kitchen
do the laundry
feed the baby
organize
categorize
socialize!

once YOU are all taken care of, you must

fight for your right to party but I mean, really...

F--- PARTIES, WRITE POETRY
make some money

Chapter VII. you got away from it
now you can go back to it
but you’ve got
to feel first

Mary Jo Bang describes PUNCTUM as
the ability of the photograph to cause actual exquisite physical pain to a person.

all art can do this
so
I suppose depression and art often come hand in hand

it's a bit heavy realizing nothing is beautiful
and you're gonna have to do it by your own damn self

but you get over it I guess

Chapter VIII. you do

Pamela Alexander writes,
Consider events as places to live, and paragraphing as paper sculpture.

me I use text as material alone...

the artist is an asshole but at least he keeps

\[14\] Just like you and I...
to himself
the real artist doesn’t talk
you don’t see the real artist
the real artist toils
the real artist has no time
but oh!
sometimes the art just flows
and you just have to stop
thinking
you
woke it up
now work with it
the foxes are dancing around you
congratulations
it’s about
damn
time
now
do it
well
I’m watching
not really
I’m probably
installing
after all
the work is not the sculpture ¹⁵
as Nicola Carrino would say
or
the art/isn’t/the hard/part ¹⁶
as I would according to Carrino
the work itself does not even exist
– only its project does
in the end, to create

collective participation... ix

are you with me?
are you angry?
don’t be...

see
if I were to have an artist’s manifesto
here’s the way it would go:

I do not want to argue with you.

---

¹⁵ this is a claim
¹⁶ this is a more universal elaboration of that claim
Chapter IX. WAGING WAR/BATTLING FOR EXISTENCE/THE CRITIQUE

as previously stated
ideally the work does the talking but academia is demanding and so you get this superficial seriousness-
-artspeak- -zombie-made scenario

you see
the critique is a pretend game
where it is very important to block out the information that it is a pretend game

often a cursory glance
followed by talkingtalkingtalkingtalkingtalkingtalking

followed by an appraisal of excellence within imaginary standards

oftentimes (being) a disorienting estrangement

but every once in a while some blithe reassurance

often people say ‘oh but other artists use text it reminds me of [famous artist]’

William Powhida a modern day ‘text artist’ who enjoys poking fun at well-off art world people through cynical colorful personal but unpoetic
longhandings would say that really means it’s such a rip off

yes yes
we are swimming with big fish we cannot see probably

Chapter X. digestion/reaction/resolution

*a professor is someone who talks in someone else’s sleep* 

but ultimately it’s up to the artist

you react you react you react you react

sometimes a man must fight so hard for life that he doesn’t have time to live it

Bukowski said that little by little the mind is lost

the grind begins

so as per Schopenhauer

there would be less suffering in our world if people greeted each other

with instead of (some) ‘sir’ ‘fellow sufferer’

and I agree have mercy

17 (your art)
you see
there isn’t too much compromise
reason doesn’t mean much of anything
    sure, severity has its cycles
but it’s a slow stubborn beating either way
you know you know
    that good old, ever so gradual decay
    we are toppling!
on fire!
    always!
let’s face it
might as well sip on French wine
sit around the fire
and chill out while we can, when we’re capable
    seems the best way to cope
some holy space of unkinking, unthinking, unlearning¹⁸
and then starting all over again, from square one
I guess that’s all that matters and ever will
    some satisfiable sitting still
I only hope they have free halos in heaven
    either that or some decent horns in hell
one can only wait and see
    just the way it goes
    what it is
    no one knows
    keeps you right on the tip of your toes
surprise, the element
    the skies won’t say a thing
    and the sun
too will be spun
spit out into spacelessness
    every single start, unstoppably unstable
we have no choice but to entangle ourselves in intimacy
    and wait for sparks¹⁹ to begin speaking.

¹⁸ the aformentioned ‘area of pause’ is, finally, not entirely exclusive to one’s solitude, but can be understood and seen in solidarity
¹⁹ the art follows.


